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Pugh, George Ellis

Speeches delivered by the Hon. George E. Pugh...

[S.l.]

[1856]

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SPEECHES

DELIVERED BY THE

HON. GEORGE E. PUGH,

SENATOR FROM OHIO,

AND THE

HON. WILLIAM BARKSDALE,

REPRESENTATIVE FROM MISSISSIPPI,

BEFORE THE DEMOCRATIC MASS MEETING HELD IN BALTIMORE,

August 18, 1856.

MR. BARKSDALE'S SPEECH.

Fellow-citizens: I am gratified that an opportunity has been afforded me to-night to address an audience of the people of the State of Maryland; a State renowned as one of the "old 13" which threw off the yoke of British tyranny and oppression, and established our present free and republican institutions. And I am particularly gratified that I am enabled to address an audience in the city of Baltimore; the first city in the South, renowned for the gallantry and enterprise of her men, and the beauty and intelligence of her women. [Applause.]

Fellow-citizens, we are engaged in a great contest; in a contest in which is involved, in my opinion at least, the destinies of this now glorious Union. You have already been told that, in Presidential contests in the past, two parties were arrayed against each other on national questions. Now, however, one of these parties has gone down, and a sectional issue is presented before the country for its decision. Three parties are in the field. But I shall first look into the claims of the Know Nothing party to the favor and support of the people.

With both of the distinguished gentlemen who have preceded me, I object to the name of this party, because a party which seeks to control the destinies of a great government like this, ought to profess at least to know something. [Applause.] This party came upon the country but a few years ago, and how did it come? openly and boldly in the light of day, proclaiming its principles? No, fellow-citizens, no. It came at the hour of midnight, when honest people ought to be, if they are not, asleep. It is an oath-bound organization. It fetters the limbs, seals the lips, and ties the tongue of its initiates; and these objections, it seems to me, ought to be of themselves insuperable. But I hasten over the manner of the organization of this party, for the purpose of examining its practical effects upon the country. Look to the House of Representatives. It has elected to that body from the Northern States ninety members, eighty-four of whom—the calculation has been carefully made—are now zealously co-operating with the Black Republican party. It elected in the Northern States ten Abolition Governors, and that, too, over sound, conservative, national Democrats. Wilson, of Massachusetts, John P. Hale, the head and front of the Abolition party, Durkee, Harlan, and Trumbull, were all elected to the Senate by Know Nothing votes. Wherever that party succeeded in the Northern States, wherever its banner floated in triumph at the North, it was a triumph of the enemies of the South.

And what are the measures of that party? They tell you that Americans must rule America. Well, I am in favor of Americans ruling America; we are all in favor of Americans ruling America, and they have always done so. The Constitution wisely provides that none but native born citizens shall be eligible to the office

INTENTIONAL SECOND EXPOSURE

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of President and Vice President of the United States. In the United States Senate how many foreigners are there? Not one, to my knowledge. Go to the House of Representatives, and there is no foreigner in that body, so far as my knowledge extends. How was it in the last Congress? There was but one foreigner in the Senate, and that foreigner was James Shields, of Illinois, [loud and continued cheers and applause,] who poured out his blood like water in vindication of the rights and honor of his adopted country. And for one, I would like to swap off such native American Abolition demagagues as Hale, Wilson, Burlingame, and Trumbull, for a few more such patriotic and noble hearted foreigners as James Shields. [Renewed and continued applause.]

Some of our foreign population may be, and perhaps are, objectionable, but many of them are among our most industrious and enterprising citizens. They ditch our farms, construct our railroads, build up our cities, and thus add to the permanent wealth and prosperity of the country. But they say, "Americans must rule America." What does that mean? It means, I suppose, judging the organization from what we have seen of it, that all the offices must be appropriated to themselves. They tell you that the office must seek the man, and not the man the office. That is beautiful in theory, but how do they carry it out in practice. They are grasping now at all the offices within the gift of the people, from the Chief Magistracy down to that of constable in your cities. Is not that so? Will any man undertake to question it? The office must seek the man! If all the Know Nothings in the country, who are seeking and who, in fact, are clamoring for office, were marshalled in one grand army, and if they would fight, and I think they would for the people of this country, at least so far as I know them, have no objections to fighting, they would be more invincible than the legions of Cæsar, or the trained veterans of Napoleon.

They say the purity of the ballot-box must be perserved. That is all right. But how have they preserved it? Here, in the city of Baltimore, I undertake to say that since this Know Nothing party originated, there has been more riots, more bloodshed, more hearts of widows and orphans wrung, because of the lawless conduct of this Know Nothing organization, than was ever before known in the history of this city. I submit it to you, if such is not the fact. [Cries of "it is, it is."] How was it in the city of Louisville at the last election? They gained a victory there, and how did they gain it? By mob-law and violence, by sacking houses, by bloodshed and murder. God deliver the Democracy from such triumphs as these. [A voice in the crowd, "it will not be so next time."] It will never be so again. The people are indignantly throwing off the shackles of Know Nothingism, and are now, as God made them, free citizens of a free country, and they intend to preserve the purity of the ballot-box in the right way.

But I pass on. This Know-Nothing party has nominated Mr. Fillmore for the Presidency. Now, I do not care to criticise the public career of Mr. Fillmore. But it is my duty to say that, while he was a member of Congress, whenever the question of slavery was before that body, he voted with Giddings and Slade and that class of politicians. And that no vote of Mr. Fillmore's during his whole Congressional career, cannot be found recorded in favor of the South. I challenge any friend of his to show me where Mr. Fillmore has sustained and vindicated the constitutional rights of the South. It cannot be done. But it is said that after he succeeded to the Presidency his administration was national. How was that? How was his cabin et selected? Among national men at the North? Every man who was selected from the Northern States had advocated the Wilmot Proviso and the exclusion of the South from every foot of our national domain.

Who was his Secretary of his Treasury? Thomas Corwin, who made, in the Senate, at the very time our gallant soldiers were bearing our flag in triumph against a foreign foe, the infamous declaration that if he were a Mexican "he would welcome them with bloody hands to hospitable graves." And I make the charge without the fear of successful contradiction, that Mr. Fillmore, while President, appointed almost invariably from the Northern States, Free-soilers to office.

But we are told that he signed the compromise measures of 1850. That is true. But for one, I contend that the South gained nothing by those compromise measures but the fugitive slave law. And to that Mr. Fillmore was opposed. But as his Attorney General pronounced it constitutional, he, as a Whig President, could not object to signing it, because the Whig party were opposed to the exercise of the veto power except for constitutional objections. What then has Mr. Fillmore done for the South? What measure of his administration tended to promote the interests and protect the rights of the Southern people?

But even admitting that in a crisis like this he could be safely entrusted with the administration of the government, what prospect has he of an election? My honorable friend, who has just preceded me, [Mr. Miles,] has already met that point. In many of the Northern States an electoral ticket will not be in the field for him. What Southern States can he carry? His friends claim Maryland, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina and Louisiana. How many of these States can be calculated for him, with any degree of confidence? North Carolinia and Kentucky have already spoken, in a voice too loud to be misunderstood, in condemnation of Mr. Fillmore and the oath-bound organization which he represents. And in Tennessee and Louisiana the declaration will be equally as emphatic against him, and you can estimate what are his prospects for success in Maryland. But suppose all these States should vote for him, he will then have but forty-eight electoral votes. It may defeat Mr. Buchanan, but it would not elect Mr. Fillmore, and the election might then be thrown into the House of Representatives. Are you prepared for the struggle which will ensue if the election of the next President of the United States shall devolve upon the present House of Representatives? You know what they did in the election of Speaker. And are you willing that the House of Representatives, constituted as it is and organized as it is, shall elect your next Chief Magistrate? If not, then vote for Buchanan, and bear him triumphantly into the Presidential chair. [Cheering and applause.]

But there is another party in this contest, the Black Republican party. It sails under a black piratical flag. And it does seem to me that no man who has the heart of an American freeman can to rally under such a flag as that. It is a sectional party, banded together, no matter what may be its professions, to war upon the South, the Constitution and the Union. And who bears its flag? John C. Fremont. Distinguished only as an adventurous plunderer of the government, and as a traitor to the land of his birth. And by the name of Benedict Arnold, the impartial and faithful historian of this country will record that of John C. Fremont.

My distinguished friend who has just spoken, has told you that, upon their flag but sixteen stars are to be seen. They have excluded Maryland, covered all over with battle fields. They have excluded old Virginia, the mother of States and of statesmen. They have excluded Tennessee, where sleep forever the remains of Jackson and of Polk. Can such a party, thus arrayed for this presidential struggle, be trusted by the patriotic freemen of the country. [Cries of "No! No! No!"]

What would be the measures of Mr. Fremont if he should be elected? He would select all of his Cabinet from the North; and that in my opinion would be a violation of the spirit of the Constitution if not of its very letter. He would select his foreign ministers from the North, and from that class of northern people who would most prejudice foreign governments against our own peculiar institutions in the South. He would select all his post office agents from the North, and thus a swarm of northern office holders would traverse the southern States.

And after hurrying Kansas into the Union under the Topeka constitution, passing the Wilmot proviso, abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia, and repealing the fugitive slave law, they will strike directly at slavery in the States. To oppression like this the South will never sub-

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And after hurrying Kansas into the Union under the Topeka constitution, passing the Wilmot proviso, abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia, and repealing the fugitive slave law, they will strike directly at slavery in the States. To oppression like this the South will never sub-

mit. I come from a State which has ever been true and loyal to this Union, the State of Mississippi. [Cheers and applause.] The bones of her sons are now bleaching upon your battle fields. But for this Union, hallowed as are the reminiscences that cluster around its history, Mississippi will never wear a northern yoke, or submit to degradation or dishonor.

But, fellow citizens, there is still another party in this contest, and in my judgment, it is the only party that can save the country from the storm of sectionalism which is now threatening to burst upoiit. It is the Democratic party. Its history is identified with that of the government, from its commencement down to the present period .It speaks the same voice on the granite hills of New Hampshire—in the young but giant West, and on the shores of the far off Pacific, that it does in South Carolina and Mississippi. It stands every where on the same platform, a platform of equal rights and privileges, a platform which declares it the duty of the government to throw the broad shield of its protection alike around the institutions of every section of the confederacy. And in order to show you that it is a national party, let me tell you that when Texas, a slave territory, applied for admission into the union as a State, the northern Whigs, with Mr. Fillmore at their head turned their backs upon her. But the Democracy of the North and the South, the East and the West, cordially welcomed her into the sisterhood of American States.

How was the fugitive slave law passed? By the votes of Northern and Southern Democrats and of Southern whigs. But three Northern Whigs in either House of Congress voted for it. How was it with the Kansas-Nebraska bill? It was passed by the aid of the Northern Democracy; not a single Northern Whig or Know-Nothing voted for it. And Mr. Fillmore, *since his return from the land of foreigners and Catholics* has denounced that bill as the Pandoras box from which has issued all our difficulties.

It was passed, as I have said; by the aid of the Northern Democracy; and in the Senate of the United States, if the Southern Senators had retired in a body, the Northern Democratic Senators would have passed the bill. The Democratic party is a national party, then, and looks to the interests of the North and the South, of the East and the West.

And who has that party nominated for President? James Buchanan, of Pennsylvania, [applause,] who for forty years has been identified with the political history of this country; who aided in defending your city during the last war with Great Britain; who has been distinguished in the forum; who has been distinguished in the Senate of the United States and as the representative of our government at foreign courts. And everywhere he has been, at home and abroad, he has been the same pure and incorruptible statesman, the same friend of the people, the same advocate of the Constitution and of the Constitutional rights of every section of the confederacy. For one, I am proud of our noble leader. I am proud that the Democratic banner in this great contest, has been placed in hands so pure and undefiled.

And by the side of James Buchanan is John C. Breckinridge, of Kentucky. I know him well. I have served with him in Congress, and a purer man, a man of loftier and more generous impulses, does not live upon the face of the earth than John C. Breckinridge. He is not only a brilliant orator, but a profound statesman, and will worthily wear the honors of the second office with in the gift of the American people.

The Democratic party is not only a national party, but it is a party of progress, going on in the line of acquisition. We first acquired Louisiana, under the Democratic auspices of Mr. Jefferson, a splendid empire extending from the Gulf of Mexico in the South, far beyond the Rocky Mountains in the North. Then, during the administration of Mr. Munroe, we acquired Florida. Texas was then annexed, and during the administration of Mr. Polk, California came, teaming with wealth and sparkling with jewels and with diamonds, and to-day we have an ocean bound Republic. And as we have acquired Territory in the past, I look forward to still greater acquisitions in the future. Every mail brings us intelligence of the disintegration of Mexico. And I remember the venerable patriot and noble old statesman of Michigan, Gen. Cass, to whom we have listened to-night, with so much profit and pleasure, declaring in the Senate years ago, that the acquisition of the whole of Mexico would but add to our power and greatness. I look forward to the time, and I do not believe it is far in the future, when the stars and stripes will proudly wave from the highest peak of the Sierra Madre mountains; and when Cuba, the rich gem of the Antilles, without violating our national faith, will be added to our glorious constellation of American States.

I have thus endeavored, fellow-citizens, to present for your consideration, what I conceive to be the prominent points in this canvass. We have heard of the glorious Democratic victories, in Arkansas, North Carolina, Kentucky, and Missouri. But will the South present an unbroken front for the constitution, the Union, James Buchanan and John C. Breckinridge? Will not Maryland, the first to declare religious toleration on this Continent, be true to her ancient glories, in this great contest. The eyes of the people of this broad Union are upon you, for upon the result in Maryland may depend every thing which is dear and sacred to freemen. The party of Jefferson, of Jackson and of Polk, is in this contest, with its banner unfurled to the breeze. I call upon the lovers of the Constitution and the Union as they are, as our fathers made them, no matter what may have been their party associations in times past, to rally to its support.

I pledge you that Mississippi will do her whole duty in this contest. And I have an abiding confidence that after the election the intelligence of a glorious Democratic victory will be flashed to us over the wires from the noble old State of Maryland. [Loud and long continued applause.]

MR. PUGH'S SPEECH.

Fellow-citizens: I have only a brief message to deliver. The time and the occasion demand that my words should be few. It is a late hour; and even as the sands of that hour are wasting, so issues forth the life-blood of our republic. To-day, in Congress, a fearful wound has been inflicted upon the Constitution. Your army must be disbanded. Those whom we have sent to the Territories of Oregon and Washington, for the protection of the pioneer and his family against Indian warfare, can neither be furnished with provisions nor be recalled. Soldiers and settlers alike are abandoned in the wilderness. And this, fellow-citizens, because the Senate, the guardian of the sovereignty of the States, and the President, that high tribune to whom is entrusted the execution of the laws, would not surrender their convictions of public duty in reference to a subject of general legislation—surrender, also, their rightful independence and all the powers confided to them by the Constitution—to the dictation of a bare majority in the House of Representatives!

Thus begins a revolution which, as I believe, has long been meditated. The people of the United States must now consider and provide for an exigency so terrible. Our common country is menaced by a peril of the most enormous character—a peril which no language can exaggerate, which none can clearly and adequately express. It is the immediate and entire subversion of the Constitution under which our noble fathers gathered into one family, under the protection of one splendid form of government, all the millions who live upon the Atlantic coast, in the valley of the Mississippi, and upon the Pacific's distant shore—those who listen to the thunders of Niagara, and those who behold the Father of waters discharge his mighty volume into the gulf. It is for you, men of Maryland, now to choose your parts—whether you will arise to the prevention of this outrage, or be led off to considerations beneath the dignity of such a crisis.

Patrick Henry once related the famous anecdote of a drover, named Hook, who had furnished beef to the soldiers of the Virginia line,

but never had been paid for it. He described the French and American armies, at Yorktown, when they were paraded to receive the surrender of the British garrison, and then imitated "Johnny Hook" rushing from rank to rank with a hoarse shout of "beef! beef! beef!" I cannot but recal this story whenever I think of the "South Americans" or Know Nothings of the "national" branch. Here, now, is the Democratic party, in all the States, North and South, East and West, arrayed in the order of battle, column after column, phalanx on phalanx, to receive the last and desperate assault of the Black Republican hosts. On the very eve of battle—when our thoughts should be stern and solemn—lo! the air is filled with piteous cries from thousands of men (honest, doubtless, but misguided,) about the "Pope! Pope! Pope!"

It is altogether ludicrous. Let us conquer the deadly enemies in our midst; and when we shall have re-established and secured the foundations of our government, it will be full time to take the Pope in hand.

The burden of this struggle, fellow-citizens, is not upon you. It is upon that noble old Senator [General Cass,] who addressed you to-night, and upon other Democrats of the North, who, like him, have staked their political fortunes in your behalf. Will you help us, or will you turn your backs upon us? That question you are to decide.

If you should throw your votes away—if, at such a time, you should embark in idle questions, address yourselves to matters of no practical importance, or, at most, of temporary disadvantage—if you should prefer Millard Fillmore to James Buchanan, with what face could you again ask us to defend your rights? Indeed, whether asked or not, we should be unable to render any assistance. You would have betrayed us as well as yourselves. That is the message I have to deliver, and I deliver it to you in all sincerity and frankness.

To what does the Know Nothing party amount? I do not speak of the measures which it proposes: they are as bad as they can be. I do not speak of its peculiar organization: that is even worse than its measures. I speak of its present condition It aspires to be called a National party—to take care of this government. Why, it cannot take care of itself Where are its two sections? As far apart as the poles. It has never been able to hold a National Convention without a schism, and it never will be. It was a secret society at first; and, as such, by the alliance of its forces with the forces of Abolitionism and other factions, it achieved a victory throughout the Northern States. And then, flushed with pride and vain glory, its members assembled at Philadelphia, in 1855, to establish a national platform. What need of a platform had they? Were not all the doctrines and principles of the society contained in the ritual, and verified by oath? It would have been more appropriate to publish that. In the name of common sense, I ask, why should these gentlemen promulgate a platform? Could it be for the instruction of the uninitiated? But they had, already, declared us to be outside barbarians, mere heathen, unfit to vote or be voted for. They adopt a platform! It was entirely superfluous. They took airs on themselves—like Tom Donohue's muley cow that would not suffer herself to be milked until Tom had decorated her with a pair of false horns.

There is no platform on which all the Know Nothings can agree. The first one—to which I have already referred—contained a famous twelfth section; but the Northern councils repudiated that section at once. Another convention was called, in February last, to construct a new national platform, as well as to propose a national candidate. On that occasion, you will recollect, the Southern delegates "bolted" the platform, and the Northern delegates "bolted" the candidate. This party is divided against itself; the members agree upon nothing essential. Yet it struts forward, in an hour of emergency like the present, to insist that the Democratic party, with fifty years of public service, should stand aside and give it place! Was anything ever so preposterous—even in this age of brass? My friend from Mississippi, (Mr. Barksdale,) has well said that the Know Nothings cannot

promise themselves the electoral vote of a single Northern State: to which I add that, in some of those States, they have not even an electoral ticket. Their State councils assemble, one after another, only to declare against Fillmore, and in favor of Fremont. Why, therefore, should you of Maryland—whose rights and honor are so deeply involved in the Presidential contest—why, in an hour when each true American should stand by the side of his brother—why should you follow this Jack o' Lantern into the quagmires of Destruction?

I do not exhort you thus, fellow citizens, upon any pretence of disinterestedness. I cannot escape the conviction that our Union is now in imminent danger. Its downfal would be a stupendous misfortune to every man, to every woman, throughout this republic—a misfortune which could not even cease with this generation. No! no! a dissolution of the Union is fraught with misery to all time:

> "The child may rue that is unborn,
> The hunting of that day!"

To you and me, especially, and to those who, like us, reside in cities upon the line of division between the North and the South, this Union must always be an affair of vital interest. Dissolution would annihilate our prosperity and our hopes. There is not one foot of real estate, in Baltimore, that would not be depreciated more than seventy-five per cent. Let mercenary considerations inspire us, at least, if we are incapable of responding to considerations of a higher character.

For what do the friends of Mr Fillmore, in this State, contend? Do they desire that the Black Republican faction should achieve success in the coming election? What have you to expect from such an achievement? The Black Republicans must either adhere to their present professions—in which event your peace, your happiness, your honor, would be overthrown—or else, even if those professions should be abandoned, their practices heretofore but faintly foreshadow the public profligacy and misrule to which you and all of us must be subjected. This, therefore, is your own contest: it involves your rights, your safety, and only through them, the rights and safety of the Union at large. If, in such a contest, you should allow yourselves to be deluded by Know Nothing orators and editors, you would resemble no one so much as that old man in the Pilgrim's Progress, who bent himself toward the earth, gathering straws and chaff with a muckrake, while above his head, a crown of stars was vainly held out for acceptance.

I have said that the act of revolution, this day perpetrated, has been meditated a long while. We are now without an army; and the question is whether, in a twelvemonth, we shall have any government. Can it be that instead of the Union established by our fathers—a Union in which the rights and the welfare of each State are equally cherished—our eyes will soon behold a disorganized republic—States torn apart and hostile—citizens, now brothers, engaged in fierce assaults upon the peace, the happiness, the liberty, of each other, and the dearest hopes of all? The Union is our heritage. Our fathers gave it to us. They earned it in battle—battle long continued and sternly endured—battle won by the aid of many an anxious prayer. It is the reward and the representative of their glorious deeds, their wisdom, their pious devotion. Are we sons worthy of such sires? Are we able to sustain what we have thus received? These questions now present themselves. We read of the times which tried men's souls.—These are times which try the hearts and very souls of men. It is in such a crisis that patriots rise above all considerations of former choice or accident, and clearly demonstrate their fitness to rule America by first ruling themselves.

Fellow-citizens, we do not approach this contest in the same advantage as heretofore. Our mighty prophets—Jackson and Calhoun, Clay and Webster—they sleep with the dust of heroes from Bunker Hill to Churubusco. One remains—venerable in age and mature in experience—honored throughout his long term of public service—now, as always, an example of high devotion, signal attachment, unshaken fidelity to

the cause of the Union, of the Constitution, of the rights of all and the peace of all. Whilst he yet lives—the greatest citizen of the Republic—let the voice and the name of LEWIS CASS inspire us with a courage, a virtue, a zeal, which admit of no resistance, nor any abatement!

My friends—for I thank God that I have still the privilege of thus addressing you—Black Republicanism endeavors to accomplish, although it has not yet accomplished, a severance of the political, social, and fraternal ties which unite us. I cannot entertain so wicked a sentiment: I must ever cherish the people of Maryland, and of all the States, as fellow-citizens, friends, and brothers—bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh. It depends on yourselves, in a great degree, whether such an affection shall henceforth bind the North and the South together. The rage of civil war has been kindled in our borders, and patriots, in every State, are hastening to the rescue. Where will you be found? Will you join us in battle for the Union—or will you retire from the combat altogether? There has hardly been a field of glorious strife, in our history, upon which the blood of Maryland was not poured out.

I ask you, then, my gallant friends—sons of heroes—do you intend to engage in the battle, and, if so, upon which side? If with those who now stand arrayed for the Union, its innumerable blessings, its glories, its brilliant promises—with those who are ready to sacrifice all, except honor, in a cause so just and sacred—if upon the side of your country, and beneath your country's untarnished flag, swear it to me this night! Swear by that monument erected to commemorate the valor of your fathers! Swear that henceforth, in whatever circumstances and in every trial, to the utmost of your exertion, to the utmost of your abilities, you will be faithful to the Constitution—and faithful even unto death!

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